



II. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

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This handbook on transmissible diseases, created by the IDWG, is not intended to provide extensive descriptions of all transmissible diseases which may occur in a zoo collection, but we hope that it will be a useful tool for every European zoo and/or wildlife veterinarian encountering a problem related to such diseases. The handbook should help to find answers to the question “what should I do” when an infectious disease is suspected. Furthermore, in regard to inter-zoo exchanges, it is very important to standardise surveillance programs for infectious diseases in European zoos. This handbook should help to overcome the differences present within Europe and to attain the standardisation required by the Balai Directive (92/65/EC). EAZWV recommendations for application of the directive have therefore been included. These recommendations are accepted by SANCO in Brussels as a guide for the authorities to audit the approvals of zoos under the Balai Directive. (SANCO/10479/2005)

As mentioned above, the handbook is not supposed to replace good scientific books. On the contrary, such books will still be necessary for finding detailed information. The handbook is basically a review. It summarises information on various diseases: susceptible animals, zoonotic potential, clinical symptoms, pathology, diagnostic methods, qualified laboratories, treatment, prevention, experts who may be consulted, legislation (esp. European laws) and relevant literature. The detailed table of contents and the standardised format of the fact sheets will help the reader to find information quickly. Almost all the fact sheets were reviewed by two experts. For a few fact sheets only one reviewer could be found. The search engine on this CD-ROM will help the reader to find his way through the book.

The handbook should be a “living” book. Our European world is changing fast and the information will soon be outdated if we don’t revise it regularly. A continuous updating process is a prerequisite for a reliable and useful tool! Ideally, the handbook should include all diseases mentioned in the Balai Directive (92/65/EC) as well as other diseases relevant for exchanges of animals between zoos (OIE list A and B and certain zoonoses). Again it looks like we have succeeded in this!

In addition to the fact sheets, there are general chapters about European legislation, the integral texts of the relevant European regulations, the EAZWV recommendations on the Balai Directive, post-mortem procedures, guidelines for cleaning and disinfection, vaccination of non-domestic carnivores, Tuberculosis, Blue Tongue and lists of reference laboratories.

The authors of the various fact sheets have done their best to meet the requirements. Almost all fact sheets from the second edition have been updated! Our living book needs to be updated regularly. We therefore urge all readers to send us their comments for incorporation in future editions.

The chapters on legislation, the list of reference laboratories as well as OIE list A and B have been included to compensate for the empty sections in many fact sheets. Many European legislation relevant for exotic animals are added in order to have a more complete dossier. A list of IDWG members is not included in the handbook, because readers can address questions directly to them if necessary, since addresses from the authors (read IDWG members), can be found in the fact sheets themselves.

The legislation texts can be easily downloaded and printed as PDF-files in the various European languages at <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/>

This time the IDWG has again chosen to bring this edition digitally on a CD-ROM or downloadable at www.eazwv.org and www.eaza.net and not in print. This has reduced the costs of producing the book and will also reduce the costs of spreading it enormously. Another advantage was the easy expansion of the book, since the second edition already comprised of 662 pages. This book contains more legislation and new chapters, thus a lot more pages, and a printed version would become too massive to distribute and would also be a lot more expensive. We also hope that the book in this format will find its way globally more easily.

This fourth edition, like the previous editions, will be spread to all EAZWV members, all EAZA zoos, Central Veterinary Officers of the 27 EU Member States, the O.I.E., and SANCO in Brussels. Another advantage of this version is the search engine which is included on this CD-ROM.

At this point I would like to thank the authors of all the fact sheets for their tremendous work. Norin Chai did the editing of the fact sheets of this fourth edition. For the final editing Ayla Bayens was of great help. I would also like to thank EAZA and EAZWV for their financial support. All people involved understood the need to standardise some aspects of our work in the context of a rapidly-changing Europe. Without their involvement it wouldn't have been possible to create this handbook. Let's hope that all EAZWV members as well as the EAZA zoo community will appreciate this work, make use of it, and help us to improve it!

For comments you are kindly requested to contact the chairman of the IDWG:
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